

Concerning

Women

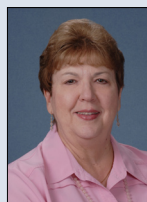


A PUBLICATION FOR WOMEN VETERANS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Summer 2008

Visit us at www.charleston.va.gov

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a message from the

*Program
Manager*

Dear Friends,
You've heard the saying that women always take care of themselves last. We want that to change for our women veterans. Unfortunately, recent indicators show women veterans are scoring lower than their male counterparts on important medical measures. For example, many women are scoring too high on their A1C test meaning their diabetes is not regulated properly. Women veterans also need to check their glucose levels regularly and stay on a diabetic diet.

High blood pressure is another important concern for women. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can cause strokes and heart problems. Healthy blood pressure is below 140/90. A healthy diet and exercise are key. If you are on blood pressure medication make sure you take your medication every day.

Your primary care provider is always available to assist you in managing your diabetes, high blood pressure or other chronic conditions. You may also call the Women Veterans Program liaisons at:

Charleston VAMC

Bunny Mizzell, LISW-CP
(843) 789-7260

Myrtle Beach Primary Care Clinic

Jan Truszkowski, MSW
(843) 477-0177 ext. 2458

Savannah Primary Care Clinic

Tyajuana Williamson, MSW
(912) 920-0214 ext. 2090

Goose Creek Primary Care Clinic

Tania Demaggio, MSW
(843) 789-6668

Beaufort Primary Care Clinic

Mary Scirto, RN
(843) 770-0444

With healthy wishes for a great summer,

Bunny Mizzell, LISW-CP

Bunny Mizzell, LISW-CP
Women Veterans Program Manager

Combat Veteran Eligibility Enhanced

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 extended the period of eligibility for health care for veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, from two to five years effective Jan. 28, 2008.

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides cost-free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to military service to currently enrolled veterans. New enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after Jan. 28, 2003 are eligible for the enhanced benefits for five years post discharge.

Veterans discharged from active duty before Jan. 28, 2003 who apply for enrollment on or after Jan. 28, 2008 are eligible for the enhanced benefit until Jan. 27, 2011.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 202,000 women serving on active duty as of Sept. 30, 2006. Of that total, 34,000 women were officers, and 168,000 were enlisted. Fifteen percent of the armed forces are women and there are 1.7 million women veterans in the nation. Approximately 16 million women between the ages of 18 and 64 are uninsured in the U.S.

Combat veterans, while not required to disclose their income information, may do so to determine eligibility for beneficiary travel benefits and exemption of copays for care unrelated to their military service.

Veterans, including activated reservists and members of the National Guard, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Documentation used to determine service in a theater of combat operations can be military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater, receipt of combat service medals, or receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.

Under the combat veteran authority the VA provides cost-free care and medications to veterans with conditions that are potentially related to combat service. The veterans are given full access to the VA's medical benefits package. Veterans are encouraged to enroll during this enhanced period even if no medical care is currently needed.



For additional information, contact

*Renee Reagan, OIF/OEF Program Manager at the
Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center at (843) 789-6568.*

MOVE...

CHANGES LIFE

For more information or to enroll
in the MOVE program contact
Nancy Gannon at (843) 789-7607.

At 52, Jan Barto has been given a new lease on life. Barto has been overweight most of her life but in the past year she has lost 48 pounds - a task she could not have accomplished prior to enrolling in MOVE, the Motivating Overweight Veterans Everywhere program at the Goose Creek Primary Care Clinic.

The MOVE program is designed to educate veterans on nutrition, diet and exercise. The classes meet every other week for 16 weeks and then the veterans come in for a monthly weigh-in and class. Some of the class subjects are nutrition, label reading, counting calories, dining out, portion distortion, herbs and spices and lipids.

"What makes this program so different is it is an educational program. In the process of losing weight patients are learning a skill that will help them the rest of their lives," said Tina Lybrand, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center registered dietitian and MOVE program coordinator.

"We talk a lot about how to make lifestyle changes, and make the right decision at the table and in the grocery store. We have a lot of fun in class and we learn from each other," Lybrand said.

When Barto started the MOVE program in January 2007, she weighed 255 pounds and was really skeptical about the class helping her achieve her goal to lose 100 pounds.

"Over the years I have been on so many diets that didn't work but I figured why not, it's worth a try. Throughout the year I've been able to make real life changes that I can stick with," she said.

She followed the MOVE program plan and she and her husband increased their exercise regime. Now she swims and goes to the gym several times a week.

One year later she weighed in at 207 pounds. She went from a size 24 to a size 18 dress. Most importantly, Barto's weight loss has improved her health and her sleep.

"I have sinus and allergy issues, so before the program, I was snoring my husband out of bed every night. Now I don't snore like I used to. It's nice sleeping with my husband again," she said.


Barto said she no longer has to take cholesterol medication, and her dentist even noticed improvement in her teeth.

Barto is also turning heads at the gym.

"People at the gym stop me now to ask how much weight I've lost. I carry extra copies of some of the MOVE lessons, to give to people. I can't say enough good things about this program," she said.



Jan Barto, Motivating Overweight Veterans Everywhere (MOVE) program participant, walks on a treadmill as part of her exercise routine. The MOVE program is designed to educate veterans on nutrition, diet and exercise.

 Concerning Women is offered to provide health information. Medical advice should be obtained from your health care provider. If you would like to provide any suggestions or story ideas email us at vhachaconcerningwomen@va.gov or check out the latest news on our website www.charleston.va.gov. Questions or comments, please call (843) 789-7260. Editors: Bunny Mizzell and Kimberly Champagne

VA Is Leader in Hospice and Palliative Care

Death is never easy. Dying can be even harder. That is why each day at every VA across the country dedicated teams of palliative care professionals are helping veterans and their families through the end of life.

Palliative care is emotional, social, medical and spiritual support for terminally ill patients and their families. Only about one-fourth of all American hospitals offer such services. In 2007, nearly half of all veterans who died in VA facilities received care from a palliative care team prior to their deaths.

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center Palliative Care Team, initially established in 2002, consists of a physician, nurse, social worker, chaplain, dietitian and pharmacist, all of whom can assess the patient's needs and decide if he or she would benefit from palliative care.

"The Palliative Care Team facilitates patient and family conferences to define goals of care including advance directives and to determine the eligibility of patients for supportive care services. The primary objective of the team is to honor the

veteran's preferences pertaining to end of life care," said John Painter, Charleston VAMC chaplain and Palliative Care Team member. Services include Home Health and Home Hospice which provides needed assistance with home services, medications, pain

of resources and volunteers," explained Painter. "Pain management is also very important, as is a homelike environment in the inpatient rooms on Patriots Harbor (Community Living Center). We view this approach to end of life care in terms of a cultural transformation, where the wishes of the patient become the primary focus."

In 2001, the National Hospice-Veteran Partnership Initiative began building partnerships between VA facilities and community hospice providers. These initiatives are funded in part by the VA and by nonprofit groups such as the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Advanced Illness Care Coordination Center. Patients who may be considered for palliative/hospice care would include terminally ill patients with cancer, heart disease, pulmonary disease, dementia, liver disease, kidney disease and other illnesses.



The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center Palliative Care Team offers emotional, social, medical and spiritual support for terminally ill patients and their families.

management and nurse case management. "Our team determines unique needs, for example, insuring that the patient has access to family, favorite activities or favorite foods. Providing such access often involves creative thinking and extensive coordination

For more information on palliative/hospice care, contact Social Worker Susan Storm at (843) 789-7384.



Increases Travel Reimbursement for Eligible Veterans



Mileage reimbursement more than doubled on Feb. 1 for eligible veterans. To offset the high gasoline costs, VA raised the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 to 28.5 cents per mile. This is the first increase in the mileage reimbursement rates in 30 years. Deductibles will still be applied for certain mileage reimbursements.

See your local travel office for information.



and the time is right for telling you what is going on at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center.

- ☀ Our free valet parking service for patients and visitors is a hit with more patients and visitors using the service every week.
- ☀ Charleston VAMC and MUSC recently unveiled a new TomoTherapy suite that brought the latest in precision radiation therapy for cancer patients to the LowCountry.
- ☀ 1-800-273-TALK ... the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ... is available to everyone. Veterans will be directed to the VA. The call is free and completely confidential.
- ☀ We are pleased to announce that our Gynecological Clinic (GYN) has reopened. The new attending physician is Dr. Reshma Khan. If you need an appointment or you have an unresolved GYN problem, contact your primary care provider to request an appointment with Dr. Khan.

Charleston VA Medical Center

843-577-5011 or toll free **1-888-878-6884**

Telephone Advice Line

843-789-6400 or toll free at **1-888-878-6884**

Veterans who need medical advice from their Primary Care provider or have questions about their medications can call the TAP line Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Scheduling an Appointment

843-789-6500 or toll free at **1-888-878-6884**

Veterans who need to schedule, cancel or reschedule an appointment for all Primary Care Clinics including Myrtle Beach, Savannah, Beaufort and Goose Creek can call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Automated Prescription Refill Line

843-577-5011 extension 5220 or toll free at **1-888-878-6884 extension 5220**

Veterans who need to request a refill of a prescription or check the status of refills can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Have your social security number and prescription numbers ready when calling.

VA Benefits (other than healthcare)

1-800-827-1000

Veterans who need information on VA benefits including VA pension and compensation, home loans and education can call the VA Regional Office.

Billing Questions

1-866-258-2772

Veterans who have questions about a bill received from the Charleston VA Medical Center can call the VA Revenue Center.

For more information on VA related topics visit www.charleston.va.gov.

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